

Women's History Month 2014

Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment US Army Women's Museum

In keeping with the 2014 National Theme of *Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment*, the staff of the United States Army Women's Museum searched our vast archival collection and out of thousands of possibilities, selected nine great American women who, in service to their country, exemplify these standards. The contributions of these women are spread over more than a hundred years of history and they take place in times of peace and in times of war. One featured patriot, who helped prove the value and courage of female pilots during World War II, paved the way for another seventy years later who flew combat missions in Iraq. A civilian secretary charged with recruiting 5,000 women to serve in clerical positions overseas during World War I demonstrated as much commitment as a logistics specialist in charge of supervising thousands of containers of relief supplies to an earthquake devastated Haiti. One of these women pulled a man from a burning pool of gasoline during World War II, another was a nurse at the Battle of the Bulge, and one was the first female physician's assistant to accompany Special Operational Forces into a combat zone. Two of these stories feature women who helped move the Army forward during times of significant cultural change. One was an African American Commanding Officer who helped guide the Women's Army Corps through racial desegregation and another was the woman who established the first WAC Detachment in Vietnam. The women we have featured for this year's theme, *Celebrating Women of Character, Courage, and Commitment*, are representative of the vast and varied historical collection housed at the United States Army Women's Museum. We wish we could feature them all!

Specialist Aleshia Johnson-Williams

Specialist (SPC) Aleshia Johnson-Williams deployed to Port Au Prince, Haiti with little more than 12 hours notice in support of Operation Unified Response, the Haiti earthquake relief mission headed up by the United States. As part of the 689th Rapid Port Opening Element (RPOE), it was SPC Johnson-Williams and her team's responsibility to open up both the airport and sea port of debarkation and take command of port operations until the RPOE could turn their operations over to the 7th Sustainment Brigade. SPC Johnson-Williams superbly managed the North Marshalling Container Yard which was used for food, vital medical aids and other pertinent humanitarian aid. Once assigned to the yard, she quickly accounted for each container and established a plan that identified the container location by commodity. She supervised the tracking of over 2,000 containers. Her diligent actions guaranteed a smooth operation while interacting with United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the World Food Program as well as several countries' representatives. In addition to the north container yard, the RPOE also managed two other container yards, which supervised the distribution of nonfood items, water, and pallets for sustainment and humanitarian aid to the Haitian people.



Ms. Elsie Gunther

Elsie Gunther served during World War I as a civilian. She was the head of the Labor Bureau, Services of Supply (SOS), and secretary in the office of the Commanding Officer of the First Plattsburg Training School for Officers. She also served at one time as secretary for Major General Leonard Wood. Towards the end of the war, she was in charge of recruiting women for the Women's Overseas Corps (WOC) which was going to bring 5,000 women overseas to do typing and record work to make more men available to fight. However, the war ended less than a month after the WOC was formed and so the Corps was disbanded having not seen any service in World War I. In 1920, Ms. Gunther was recruited for relief service in Constantinople. Her service as a civilian was so impressive, it was written that she would have been a Major if she had not been born a woman. Instead, she served as a Major's assistant.



THE STARS AND STRIPES,
FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 1918.

FIRST WOC UNIT WITHIN A MONTH RIGHT FROM U.S.A.

**Women's Overseas Corps
Will Do S.O.S. Typing
and Record Work**

5,000 NOW BEING RECRUITED

**They'll Wear Uniforms and Live in
Billets—Don't Confuse Them
With the Waacs**

The Wocs are coming.

Five thousand women are to be brought from the United States to be a part of the A.E.F.

The first contingent of the Women's Overseas Corps—yes, the Wocs—will arrive in France within a month. Recruiting of other units, up to the 5,000 limit now set, will be carried on rapidly to meet the demands of the big departments of the S.O.S. for typists and record workers.

The new corps will consist of companies of 50 women each. The members of the W.O.C. will be under soldierly discipline and wear uniforms, although it is not expected that the discipline and general regulations will be so closely defined as for the W.A.A.C. of the British Army.

May Not Have to Salute

It is expected that the Wocs will live in billets—probably special hotels—instead of in camps, as under the British plan, although this detail has not been finally decided. It is not expected they will march in formations or observe the formalities of the salute.

The uniform will be of black, tailored on stern, simple lines, and the hat will be a black, broad-brimmed, untrimmed affair. The uniform will resemble very closely the uniform worn by the women telephone operators with the A.E.F.

Miss Elsie L. Gunther, head of the Labor Bureau, S.O.S., is in the States arranging to bring the first contingent to France. She was a secretary in the office of the commanding officer of the First Plattsburg training school for officers. She also served at one time as

secretary for Major General Leonard W. Wood.

Director in Command

There will be a director in command of the W.O.C. and each unit will be in charge of a supervisor. It has not been decided whether girls who came to France as typists in the Q.M., Signal Corps and Ordnance Departments will be brought directly into the new organization. Another question undecided deals with recruiting girls in England and France.

A large number of Waacs are now working in the Central Records Office, S.O.S. They live in camps and are under the same regulations that govern similar units with the British Army.

It is planned at present to limit the work done by the W.O.C. to inside office tasks, although it is possible that women may later be recruited to drive ambulances and other motor cars.

High Standard of Personnel

The Labor Bureau plans to make the new service as attractive as possible, with a view to maintaining a very high standard of personnel. Only women of proved capability in civil employments, with a meritorious record of living, are to be accepted. Expert stenographers are particularly needed as secretaries in some departments. Officers say that, in addition to freeing men for other duties, the women will be able to perform these secretarial duties much better than men.

Hundreds of French girls already have given invaluable service in S.O.S. departments, many of them having overcome the handicaps of a language only partly familiar to them at the time of their employment.

Chief Warrant Officer 5 Geraldine Bowers

Chief Warrant Officer 5 (CW5) Geraldine Bowers served in the Active Army and the Alabama and California Army National Guard. In her Navy Blue 80-33 flight class, she set a precedent as the first female Warrant Officer candidate to solo. Her entire class actually set a record for everyone managing to solo within 12 hours of instruction. CW5 Bowers served in support of humanitarian efforts flying relief missions over Central America, namely Honduras, to aid the victims of Hurricane Mitch. She spent 180 days flying aid back and forth to those affected by the hurricane. While in the Army National Guard, she also flew aid missions after the two earthquakes in southern California in the summer of 1992. Some of her relief missions consisted of fighting wildfires, rescuing people in mud-slides and floods, and flying the President of the United States over hurricane damage in Alabama. In 1993, the ban on women serving in combat duty at sea and in the air was lifted; CW5 Bowers was one of the first women prepared to serve in this capacity. While a CW2, in 2005, she flew Supra C-23 aircraft with the 336th Combat Support Battalion in Operation Iraqi Freedom.



Back from their humanitarian mission over the skies of Central America are National Guard members Geraldine Bowers of Paso Robles, right; Johnny Duco, Florida National Guard; Nelson Canalee, Mississippi National Guard; and Staff Sgt. John Grotheer, Florida National Guard.

**ROBLAN
RETURNS
HOME
AFTER
GIVING 180
DAYS OF
HURRICANE
RELIEF IN
CENTRAL
AMERICA**

Lady ace navigates Hurricane Mitch



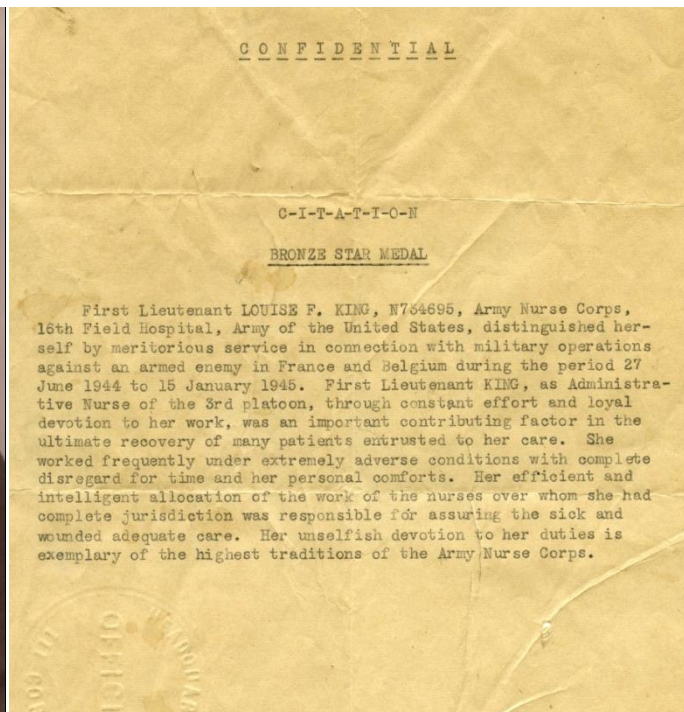
Julia Ledbetter

Julia Ledbetter was born December 20, 1921. At the age of three, she went on her first 'hop' and knew someday she would become a pilot. After graduating from college in 1943, Ledbetter applied and was accepted as a contracted pilot with the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). The WASPs were created August 5, 1943, from the merging of multiple different women pilot organizations. In the 16 months the WASP existed, more than 25,000 women applied for training; only 1,879 candidates were accepted. Of these, 1,074 successfully completed the grueling intensive training program at Avenger Field, TX. The missions of the WASPs were to perform whatever flight duties the Army Air Corps required within the United States. They ferried planes, tested them, delivered them for repair, performed check flights, put flying time on new engines, towed targets for anti-aircraft gunnery practice; flew searchlight tracking missions, instructed male pilot cadets, and performed many other tasks. Ledbetter's first assignment was with the 3d Ferry Group, Romulus AAFB, Detroit, MI. She ended up flying B-17s and B24s all across the United States before the end of the war. On 20 December 1944, the WASPs were disbanded. General Arnold's letter of notification to the WASPs stated, "When we needed you, you came through and have served most commendably under very difficult circumstances, but now the war situation has changed and the time has come when your volunteer services are no longer needed. The situation is that if you continue in service, you will be replacing instead of releasing our young men. I know the WASP wouldn't want that. I want you to know that I appreciate your war service and the AAF will miss you..." After the war, Ledbetter was an instructor until 1948. She then joined the Women's Army Corps when they became a permanent part of the Army. She went through Officer Candidate School and was an Officer in the WAC for 26 years before retiring.



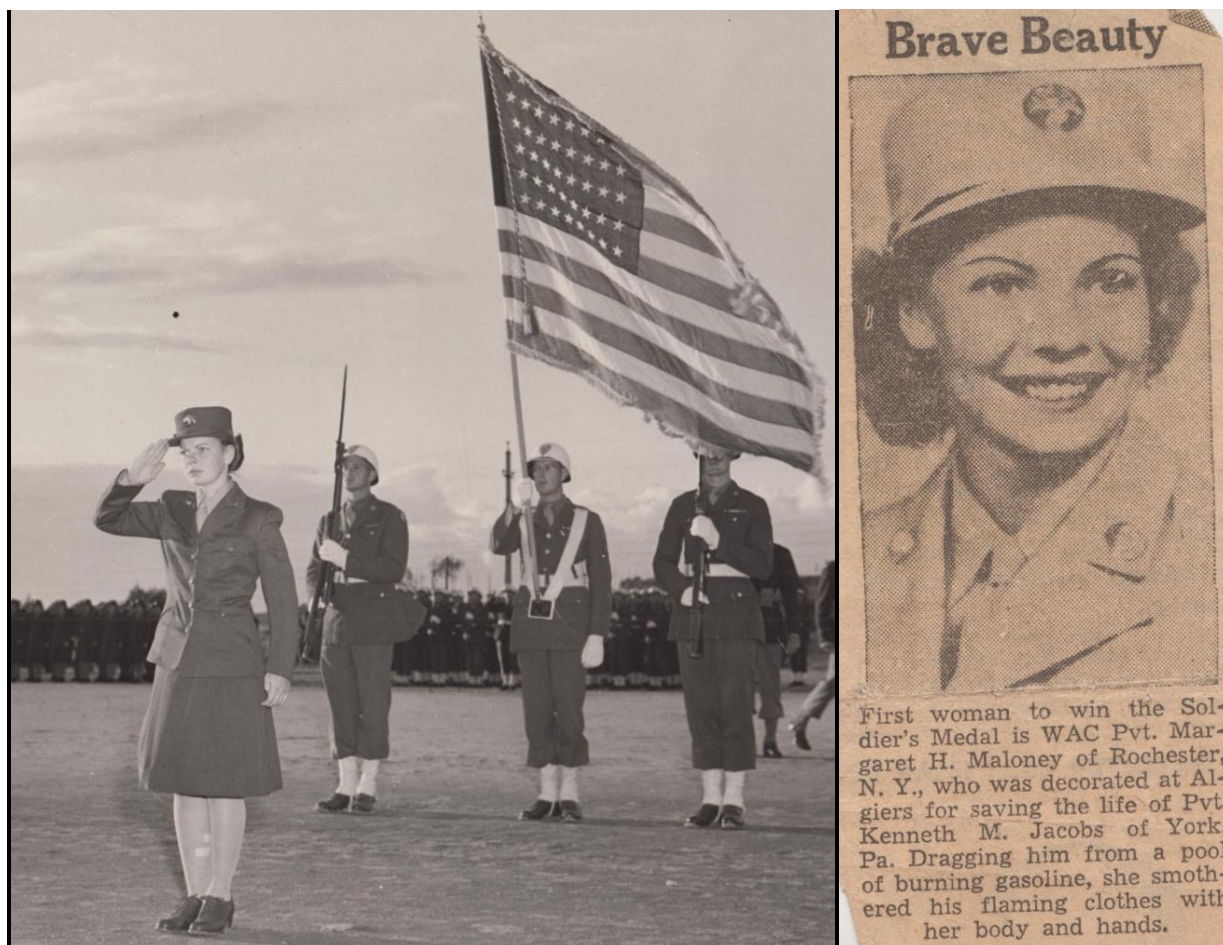
First Lieutenant Louise Fournelle King

First Lieutenant (1LT) Louise Fournelle King served in the Army Nurse Corps during World War II. She received her Registered Nurse credentials in 1928 and enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps on 8 December 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor. In 1943 she went overseas to serve in Libya, Egypt, Palestine, England, France, Austria, and Belgium. Nurses serving overseas during WWII were often near to the front lines of the battlefield. 1LT King was assigned to the 16th Field Hospital which treated combat troops as they fought their way across France, Belgium, and Germany in 1945. She found herself on the battlefield at the Battle of the Bulge. She remarked that her most distinct memory of the battle was “how cold it was and how we had to treat the soldiers for frostbite as well as their wounds.” 1LT King also treated prisoners of war and victims of Mauthausen Concentration Camp in Austria. During her time with the 16th Field Hospital, 1LT King was awarded the Bronze Star for “meritorious service in connection with military operations against an armed enemy in France and Belgium.” She was said to have “worked frequently under extremely adverse conditions with complete disregard for time and her personal comforts.” Indeed, when she was first informed of the award, she had been looking for catheters small enough for teenage German POWs, and “by the appearance of the citation it appears that she quickly folded it and shoved it into a pocket and went back to what she was doing.” The 16th Field Hospital was also awarded the Meritorious Service Award. It was the only field hospital in General Patton’s Third U.S. Army to have earned this decoration. Shortly after returning home from the war, King married and left the Army Nurse Corps.



Private Margaret 'Pee Wee' Maloney

Private (PVT) Margaret Maloney was from Rochester, New York. Short in stature, Margaret was kindly nicknamed 'Pee Wee'. Small as she was, PVT Maloney was the first member of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) to be decorated in any theater during World War II as well as the first WAC to receive the Soldier's Medal. The Soldier's Medal is awarded to members of the Armed Forces of the United States or a friendly foreign nation who, while serving in any capacity with the Army of the United States, have distinguished themselves by heroism not involving actual conflict with an armed enemy. PVT Maloney became the only WAC awarded the Soldier's Medal in the European Theater of Operations on November 16, 1943. While serving in the 2629th WAC Battalion stationed at Algiers, North Africa, PVT Maloney first dragged PVT Kenneth Jacobs from a pool of burning gasoline in the kitchen then smothered the flames with her body and beat much of the rest with her bare hands until assistance arrived. She received severe burns herself and was awarded the Medal for her heroism and self-sacrifice. Other awards PVT Maloney earned during her service include the WAAC Medal, North African Service Medal, and the Good Conduct Medal.



Lieutenant Colonel Marion Crawford

Lieutenant Colonel (LTC) Marion Crawford entered the Women's Army Corps on 16 February 1949. She served in Kaiserslautern, Germany as chief clerk for the Subsistence Branch and as a First Sergeant in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) detachment from 1953 to 1956. As a First Sergeant at Fort Sill, Oklahoma, LTC Crawford also organized and led the WAC Drill Team that performed throughout the nation as part of a recruiting program for the Corps. In 1966, she was selected as the first female First Sergeant assigned to a combat zone and she activated the first WAC detachment in Vietnam working in Saigon and Long Binh. After retiring from active duty, LTC Crawford became the first female Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (JROTC) instructor in the nation, serving in the Indianapolis Public High School system. For her service, she was awarded two Bronze Stars, a Meritorious Service Medal, and an Army Commendation Medal, among many other awards.



Major Sherry Lynn Womack

Major (MAJ) Sherry Lynn Womack was the first female physician's assistant to accompany Special Operational Forces into a combat zone. MAJ Womack served in Afghanistan as a Medical Support Officer from December 2001 through August 2002. Brigadier General (BG) Frank Wiercinski, MAJ Womack's commander on the ground, said that at the time she was the only medical professional he knew who worked specifically with women and children due to the sensitivities of religion and culture. "Major Womack displayed incredible courage and professionalism in the early stages of Operation Enduring Freedom," he said. BG Wiercinski also mentioned that he believed "the Afghans trusted her." This trust, combined with the sensitivities of religion and culture, preceded by several years the creation of Army Female Engagement Teams (FET) and Cultural Support Teams (CST). The FET and CST have been involved in Afghanistan because male soldiers are not able to interact with Afghan women because of cultural constraints. Female Soldiers volunteer to work outside their normal military occupational specialties (MOS), to build trust and create personal relationships with Afghan women and children. The painting of Major Womack below is titled "Have Stethoscope; Will Travel" and was created by Stewart Wavell-Smith. She is shown treating an Afghan baby held by her older brother. According to the artist, the painting "shows the incongruity of this Army Medic with her Stethoscope to this little child chest, but also showing the side arm on the Medic's hip."

Army's 'iron majors' back in class

All will attend staff school; officials establish Fort Lee, Fort Belvoir as branch sites

BY PETER BACQUE
Times Dispatch Staff Writer

Maj. Sherry Womack is a 4-foot-6 physician's assistant working on a Ph.D. She's the mother of five children. She has served in combat with the Special Forces in Afghanistan.

The U.S. Army thinks she needs some more education.

The service wants all its majors — midcareer officers on the verge of heavier jobs — to attend its prestigious Command and General Staff School, which in the past only the top 50 percent of Army officers had the chance to do.

Now, the Army has established branch campuses in Virginia at Fort Lee and Fort Belvoir to equip its up-and-coming leaders with the intellectual weaponry to fight and win the nation's battles in an extraordinarily complicated world.

"We're not just focusing on training for rote skill sets, the 42-year-old Womack said. "This is a different kind of education."

A glance around the classrooms at Fort Lee underlines how different it is. In America's Army, soldiers who have been in combat wear the insignia — the "patches" — of their wartime unit on the right sleeve of their uniforms.

"Our class has 15 people in it," said Maj. Kyle Patterson, a medevac helicopter pilot turned Army hospital administrator attending the staff school, "and probably only two or three don't have combat patches."

"When you hear from people who have actually been there, the 36-year-old soldier said, "that's valuable."

Fort Lee's Command and General Staff School will graduate its first class of 31 officers on Wednesday.

Attendance at Command and General Staff School broadens the horizons of



DEAN HOFFMAN/TIMES DISPATCH

what the Army calls its "iron majors" through teaching critical thinking, history and leadership, as well as strategic and tactical operations.

"Being able to dedicate your time to this level of military thinking ... and see how your job fits in the bigger Army picture, that's worth the money," Patterson said.

Historically, the Army sent only half its majors to "command-and-staff" at Fort Leavenworth, Kan.

But having decided that all those officers needed the 3½-month common-core course, Army officials said, Fort Lee and Fort Belvoir were selected as branch sites because so many of the school's candidate students are stationed nearby.

Fort Lee's 13 faculty members — with experts in disciplines from history to military operations to leadership — will annually teach more than 200 officers in two groups, while Fort Belvoir's location will handle double that number, the Army said.

The service is also setting up a third course site at Fort Gordon, Ga. Establishing the new locations is costing the

Army about \$5.4 million, said Col. Steve Jones at the service's Training and Doctrine Command at Fort Monroe.

The school's parent organization, the Command and General Staff College, is the Army's senior educational institution. Its students, the graduate-level school says, are officers who have demonstrated they have the potential to handle high-level assignments.

The Army's majors will become "workhorses of the planning staffs," said Jones, who heads Training and Doctrine Command's leader development and education directorate. "You've got majors and colonels working it out ... to make sure that things get done right."

"In the old days, we memorized what a Soviet motorized-rifle regiment looked like when it was coming toward you," said Col. Tom Weiser, director of the Army's Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth. "We don't have that luxury anymore."

The course's greatest challenge is han-

dling the river of reading assignments, the scrappy Womack said, and then applying principles from those readings to a kaleidoscope of operational situations.

But, she said, "there were no absolutely correct or incorrect applications."

Confronted with constantly adapting enemies in the complex social and political settings of Iraq and Afghanistan, young military leaders face difficult and dangerous problems for which no simple "school solution" exists.

"The stress on these people to lead in a full-spectrum environment is unprecedented," Jones said.

And, the Army says, they've got to learn to live with that ambiguity. "Agile-minded, innovative and self-aware," Jones said, "that's really what we're developing our leaders to be."

"They're going to war," he said. "We have a moral responsibility to ensure we do everything we can to be sure they're ready."

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Private First Class Vernetta Payne Jones

Private First Class (PFC) Vernetta Payne was born August 21, 1929 in Oxford, North Carolina. She had moved to Washington D.C. and was working in sales at Langston Food Shop prior to her service. PFC Payne's military service was short in length but it took place during an amazing time of change in the US Army. She enlisted in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) on 8 December 1949 in Washington D.C. At that time, the WAC had a 10% quota for black women, and as a result, every seventh increment arriving at the training center at Camp Lee, Virginia had an all black unit. Jones became part of the last segregated "Company B" when she attended the WAC Training Program for Clerks from March through May of 1950. The first integrated class began training in April 1950. Jones went on to attend the Personnel Administration Course and the Adjutant General's School in Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana. She ended her military career working in the Headquarters Company for the 6th Infantry Division at Fort Ord, California. She went on to a career with the federal government.

